

WISHA REGIONAL DIRECTIVE

WISHA Services

Department of Labor and Industries

7.06 USE OF POWERED INDUSTRIAL TRUCK LOAD ENGAGING MEANS TO REDUCE AWKWARD LIFTING DATE: May 14, 2004

I. Background

Lifting tasks in workplaces account for approximately 17,000 claims for work-related musculoskeletal disorders every year in Washington State. Lifting in awkward postures, such as while bending to lift an object from a low height on a pallet, increases the risk of injury.

Use of a powered industrial truck to raise a pallet so that loads can be lifted at waist height, or slid across without lifting, is an effective means of reducing awkward lifting. In many cases, it would be the operator of the powered industrial truck who would be transferring the load rather than another worker. However, the Powered Industrial Truck Operations Standard, WAC 296-24-23027, requires that the load engaging means (e.g., forks) be fully lowered while the operator is dismounted and within 25 feet of the truck.

II. Scope and Application

This WISHA Regional Directive (WRD), which will remain in effect indefinitely, provides guidance to WISHA enforcement and consultation staff in applying the requirements of the Powered Industrial Truck Operations Standard when the operator of the truck has dismounted to transfer loads by hand with the load engaging means raised.

III. Application Guidance

A. How should the requirements of the Powered Industrial Truck Operations Standard be applied in situations where the operator is dismounted to transfer loads by hand with the load engaging means raised?

The requirement to have the load engaging means fully lowered should be treated as a *de minimis* violation, and therefore not cited, in situations where the operator has left the load engaging means raised solely for the purpose of placing the load at a height that reduces awkward lifting or allows the load to be slid across instead of lifted.

This guidance applies only while the operator is actively loading or unloading materials from the load engaging means.

The operator, and any other persons assisting the operator, shall not position themselves beneath the load engaging means, or beneath the materials supported by the load engaging means, at any time during this activity.

B. Does this WRD affect any of the other requirements of the Powered Industrial Truck Operations Standard?

No. The remaining requirements of the standard, including the requirements to have the controls neutralized and the brakes set to prevent movement, must still be followed.

Approved: _____
Dan K. McMurdie, Acting Senior Program Manager
WISHA Policy & Technical Services

For further information about this or other WISHA Regional Directives, you may contact WISHA Policy & Technical Services at P.O. Box 44648, Olympia, WA 98504-4648 or by telephone at (360)902-5503. You also may review policy information on the WISHA Website (<http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/>).